Status of the investigation

State and Federal veterinarians established a TB response group. Most high-risk herds traced from the affected herd have been tested, and most heifers traced from the herd have been slaughtered and examined. As of July 19, more than 26,000 cattle in 19 herds had been TB tested in this investigation. So far, there is no evidence that infection has spread from this herd. However, it will take several months to complete the investigation.

Potential Impact to California's Livestock

The USDA officially designated California as Free of bovine TB in 1999. To maintain this Free status, the USDA requires the affected herd to be depopulated and there be no spread of TB in CA. If the state is unable to satisfy these requirements, the USDA will change California's status to a "Modified Accredited Advanced" status. This change, which could occur by Jan. 1, 2003, would mean that all of California's breeding cattle more than 6 months old will be required to have a negative TB test within 60 days of interstate movement, OR originate from a TB "Accredited Free Herd" (mandatory annual TB testing), OR move directly to slaughter.

If more infected herds are found and all are depopulated, the USDA will lower California's status. However, we can re-establish Free status after 2 years. If herds "test out" it takes a minimum of 5 years to regain Free status. If more than 3 infected herds are found in a year, the USDA will lower California's status further. The USDA's web site offers specific information about TB status levels.

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/nahps/tb/

Protecting Your Herd

Bovine TB spreads in droplets coughed or sneezed into the air or by consumption of contaminated water, feed, or milk. Disease can spread from cattle to other animals, and from other animals to cattle. Bovine TB usually spreads between herds by movement of infected cattle. To protect your herd, practice good biosecurity and know the source of your replacement animals. Maintain the permanent identification of animals and keep records of animals moving into and out of your herd.

Your veterinarian is an excellent source of information on bovine TB. For more information contact:

Domestic Animals

California Department of Food and Agriculture

http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/

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1220 N Street, Room A-107
Sacramento, CA 95814

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California Department of Health Services

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California Department of Food and Agriculture™

Animal Health and Food Safety Services
Animal Health Branch

Bovine Tuberculosis in California

An Update for California Livestock Producers

July 2002

General

Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious bacterial disease that often affects the respiratory system. Animals infected with TB may not show signs for years, and animals that appear healthy may be capable of transmitting infection to other animals. Three main types of TB occur - human, avian, and bovine. Human TB is rarely transmitted to non-humans, avian TB is typically restricted to birds (pigs and occasionally other animals have been affected), and bovine TB - or cattle TB - is capable of infecting most mammals.

Bovine TB has affected animal health throughout recorded history. An eradication program for bovine TB began in the early 1900's, including skin testing livestock on farms or transported across state lines and monitoring animals sent to slaughter. Bovine TB has nearly been eradicated from cattle in the U.S. as a result of this program. California has been involved in programs to eradicate bovine TB for nearly a century, and has not diagnosed infection in native cattle for more than ten years.

"As of July 19, more than 26,000 cattle in 19 herds had been TB tested in this investigation. So far, there is no evidence that infection has spread from this herd. However, it will take several months to complete the investigation"

Dr. Breitmeyer, State Veterinarian, California

2002 California Outbreak

In May 2002, bovine TB was confirmed in a Tulare County dairy herd. The herd was identified following the collection of a suspicious lesion from the carcass of a cow during routine slaughter inspection, and sent through the California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory System to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory. The lesion was caused by bovine TB. The carcass was rendered, the cow traced to the herd of origin, and the herd was skin tested for TB. All cattle that responded to the skin tests were slaughtered and their carcasses rendered. Several animals had visible lesions typical of bovine TB at slaughter, and these lesions were subsequently shown to be caused by bovine TB bacterium.

What Was the Source of the Disease?

The origin of the disease in this dairy has not yet been identified. The disease may have been present for some time in a chronically infected animal that appeared healthy. Animals that have entered the herd or had contact with the herd over the last five years are being investigated to identify the source of infection, and herds will be TB tested as indicated.

What is California Doing to Eradicate the Disease?

Strategies were put in place to control and eradicateTB on the affected dairy. This was achieved by eliminating all cattle that are infected with bovine TB, minimizing the transmission of disease within the dairy and preventing reinfection. The herd is repeatedly skin tested about every 60 days and cattle removed that respond to the test. The affected herd is under hold and cattle cannot leave the dairy without written permission. Cattle only leave the herd to be processed at a USDA inspected slaughterhouse where they receive a special inspection to ensure that they are not infected with TB. Calves are being raised away from the adult cattle and are being fed only pasteurized products. Areas that may be contaminated with TB bacteria are being cleaned and disinfected. The herd will be considered free of infection only when no TB has been found over a five year period.

What is California Doing to Prevent TB from Spreading to Other Herds?

All cattle that have been sold from or associated with the affected herd over the last five years are being traced. High risk herds are TB tested when they are identified. Efforts are being made to purchase and slaughter all the cattle that have left the herd. Tissue samples are collected from these exposed animals and the herds that received cattle from the affected herd are TB tested. Any associated and contact herds are also tested.

What is California Doing to Prevent TB Spreading to Other States?

All dairy breeding animals leaving California that are more than 6 months of age now require a negative TB test within 30 days of movement. This requirement will be reviewed as the risks are assessed.

Bovine Tuberculosis in People

The risk of people getting bovine TB from animals in the U.S. today is extremely remote. All carcasses are carefully inspected and, if infected, are rejected from the human food chain. The bacterium causing TB is killed when meat is cooked and milk is pasteurized, hence these products are safe to eat. It is also very unlikely that a person would become infected with bovine TB from an infected carcass. People who drink raw milk from infected cattle, and workers who are in close contact with infected animals are at most risk. People who come into close contact with TB-infected animals are encouraged to take extra precautions, and may wish to contact the Department of Health Services. Remember, most people get TB from other people, not from livestock.